

First images from the World Film Festival of Montreal



Jury president Gina Lollobrigida and host Jacques Fauteux



Fest director Serge Losique welcomes the Chinese delegation



Montreal's youthful look-alikes steal show



Montreal's jurists: Les Wedman(Canada), Gilbert Sigaux (France), Luis Berlanga (Spain), Rex Reed (USA) and Gilles Carle (Québec).

Producing for Fassbinder, an "irregular" job

by Kevin Tierney

When new-new German directors speak of how German films have changed over the past five years or so, the example offered more often than not is the collaboration between Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Luggi Waldleitner on the making of *Lili Marleen*.

The fact is that the producer has been making films longer than Fassbinder, the director, has been alive. Why, then, such a bizarre pairing? Marks, of course — not the kind you get in school, the kind you get at the box office. "Fassbinder is like all the other good young German directors of today. He now understands that art doesn't feed him. Like everybody else, he wants money." At least that's the way Waldleitner sees it.

The collaboration came about when Hanna Schygulla expressed an interest in playing the part of Lili. At that point, however, Swiss director Nicholas Gessner has been signed. Not a man to pass up a good deal, Waldleitner agreed to Schygulla's suggestion that Werner Fassbinder come on as director — the decision would cause some controversy in Germany. "It caused a sensation because Fassbinder is controversial, but I liked the idea of building a bridge between the younger audiences and the older ones."

Fassbinder, it seems, had been working on trying to do a re-make of *The Blue Angel*, but when problems with the rights arose, he temporarily abandoned that in favor of *Lili Marleen*. "Fassbinder is a crazy man," Waldleitner says with a look of sincerity, "but I've never met anyone who has seen so many films and knows so much. And, of course, he loves nostalgia stories. Anyway, I think his new film, *Lola*, will be his re-make of *The Blue Angel* but with no songs."

As for their relationship, Waldleitner comments that "Fassbinder needs to go to America to learn some discipline" and, as he expands on that point, it becomes clear that he is referring to the director's work habits, which apparently do not include working "regular hours". But seeing as how Fassbinder was working with his own crew, Luggi had to look on, shaking his head. "Yes, I would work with him again. Maybe. But with my crew — not his. He is a very good director but he has much to learn in terms of technique."

The cast, apart from Schygulla, was also the result of a collaboration of sorts: the producer wanted Mel Ferrer and the director wanted Giancarlo Giannini, but the latter was chosen only after discussions with Richard Gere and Michael

Douglas had broken off when both of them wanted the part expanded — "But they didn't understand that the film was called *Lili Marleen* and not *Richard* or *Michael Marleen*. However, that was one advantage to working with Fassbinder — all three of them wanted to work with him and that makes my job much easier."

The script went through a number of changes that saw it cut from four hours to three to two, but the rough cut that Fassbinder showed the producer was two hours and 50 minutes. Fassbinder understood that the film could not run more than two hours and did what he had to do.

The final version does not totally please Waldleitner, but he is happy that the film has done as well as it has wherever it has been shown thus far: "There are some things in the film that I don't like, but they were put there by Fassbinder." Is it then a Fassbinder film? "No, it's a commercial film."

Budgeted at \$6.5 million Canadian, the film was shot in Bavaria using some provincial government funding under a system that he was instrumental in setting up and he proudly reported that he has already paid it back. "I'm the first producer to pay back money to the government. It's a wonderful system — you pay it back only when you make a profit."

CINEMA

C A N A D A

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